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THE POSING OF VIVETTE.

By J. RUSSELL TAYLOR.

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VIVETTE. You've finished with my face? Then I can talk?
'Twill take an hour to mend my skirt; it caught
And spoiled my three-rail jump: I hate to sew.
Why do you paint me in these stupid woods?
What is this . . . mm . . . who is it that I am?
Bacchante, yes: but tell me what she was—
A harlequin?

THE ARTIST. Not quite: it means a girl
Who served a Greek God.

VIVETTE. O, that's what I am.
I wondered if this airy creature waltzed
In a smile, a garland, and a leopard skin
That doesn't fit: 'tis too décolleté.
But if she served a god—why, here's a nun,
A convent, dressed in purity and wreaths!

THE ARTIST. He was the god of wine, my dear.

VIVETTE. Ah, then,
The sisters dance a ballet up to church
With flapping leopard skirts, took off their wreaths
Like theatre-hats, and most demurely drank
Absinthe. . . . I wish you'd hurry: this old tree
Is rough, my foot's asleep, and ants
Explore my back. Just let me shiver, please!

THE ARTIST. It won't be long.

[*She hums a little tune, then stops. He looks up.*]

Vivette! Don't wink, don't breathe!

That's just the expression. Don't—

VIVETTE. Io, Io,
Iacchus!

THE ARTIST. Yes, the wine god. . . . But, Vivette!—

VIVETTE. 'Tis day, Silenus. We have overslept:

Has Ino risen already, little man?

Where are our mænads pale in purple hair,
Leaf-ears and slim-shanks with the mellow nymphs,
The satyrs, and the Lydian bassarids?

THE ARTIST. Well, what the devil's this?

VIVETTE.

And no wine left

For us, old goat-hoofs : . . . I am something mused;
 The torches through the dark are in my head,
 The deep-toned Chthonian cymbals up the wood,
 And all the Evian revel and parade.
 I am not yet adept in ecstasy :
 This strange new sweet romantic god of ours
 Intoxicates my fancy all too much.
 Here is a change, from tripping robes in town
 To dappled fawnskins knotted at the breast
 With snakes which float and lick us on the chins,
 Or exquisite cool-thrilling nakedness
 That dances honey-pale upon the gloom
 With sounding moons of tambourines aloft !

THE ARTIST. Good lord, she's mad !

VIVETTE.

And yet 'tis not all joy :

Mere frogs that croon and quire the death of night
 Chill our flushed dreams to ashes ; laughing fauns
 Grow wistful, and gay hamadryads mute
 When Bacchus sleeps or is away : some threat
 Lurks in the charm of this high dalliance,
 Some horror black beneath this masque of spring,
 As in Pan's piping. Even the green-wreathed wands
 Are weapons masked. Silenus, did you know
 The pine-cone on the thyrsus hid a spear ?

THE ARTIST. So I must be Silenus. Heaven help !

O yes, I knew !

VIVETTE.

The tiger, teased too far

Last night (she sprawled an insolence of grace
 Along his cruel beauty, black and gold
 And sumptuous white), nipped Ariadne's hand.
 I had not guessed the cone concealed a blade,
 Though there I saw the Theban horror drip :
 She shrieked ; the thyrsus glittered, pinned the brute
 By one gaunt striped flank unto the moss
 Where he writhed roaring till the god released
 And healed him. . . . Come, flushed ancient, we must stir.
 O for the chanting hithyramb, to wake
 The rain of pattering satyr-hoofs, and thrill
 The purple ankles of the Hyades
 Till every grape-kissed girl-foot taps in tune
 And every nymph in Naxos floats her hair !

O, Dionysus, drinker of raw blood!

O, Dionysus, golden, honey-sweet!

[*He steps forward as she begins to dance, and touches her arm.*]

THE ARTIST. Vivette—

VIVETTE.

A man here at the Mysteries!

Agave's fingers shall drip red again. . . .

Mænads, a man!

[*She leaps, one hand reaching his face before he can seize her wrists and hold her, struggling.*]

THE ARTIST. You wild-cat! Why, Vivette!

[*She falls forward against him: he lays her on the grass.*]

VIVETTE. Hullo, what's happened? O, you hurt my wrists!

What have I done—I fainted?

THE ARTIST.

Died, I think.

VIVETTE. Your face is bleeding—ah!

THE ARTIST.

I know, I know:

That blackberry caught me when I ran to help.

VIVETTE. We're brilliant. Where's my leopard skin? Why, here,

Bacchantes shouldn't swoon in evening dress

Without a chaperone: besides, it crumples

Your gorgeous lack of clothes.

THE ARTIST.

Come, child, we'll go.

I'll paint you serving tea-cups after this.

VIVETTE. O, I'm all right. Your old ants make me sick.

Please tie my shoes while I put up my hair,

My antique hair. Vivette's herself again.



THE MODEL.

Drawn by J. C. Leyendecker for the In-
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